

JOINT CITY PLAN COMMISSION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION / DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

Wednesday, March 16, 2011 – 6:00 p.m.

Portage County Library (Pinery Room) – 1001 Main Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481

PRESENT: Chairperson Mayor Halverson, Ald. Jerry Moore, Tony Patton, Anna Haines, Maurice Rice, Chairperson Lee Beveridge, George Hanson, Kathy Kruthoff, Norm Meyers Sr., Karl Halsey, and Hans Walther

EXCUSED: Shari Laskowski, Jack Curtis, Tim Seibert, and Ald. Tom Mallison

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director Michael Ostrowski, John Kneer (Rettler Corporation), Todd Grunwaldt (Grunwaldt and Associates), Ald. Jeremy Slowinski, Ald. Randy Stroik, Kurt Z., Sarena Melotte, Bill Schierl, Bob Prosch, Sarah Robinson, Kati Matthai, Amy Carriweare, Mike Phillips, Nancy Schultz, Cathy Dugan, Mary Ann Laszewski, Elbert Rackow, Pat Keller, Bob Fisch, Henry Kroger, Jennie Lane, Dan Menzel, Kathy Zimdars, Bill Zimdars, Barb Jacob, Justin Gasper, Kevin Knitt, Mike Helmrick, Matthew Brown, Tom Brown, Jan Hermann, Kathy Hermann, Justine Pawelski, Mary Stroik, Annette Gosh, Dorothy Konkol, Wendie Cliver, Dan Goulet, Bernie Coerper, Jackson Case, Andrew Beveridge, Dan Stoltz, Cindy Nebel, Tim Lecher, and Dani Crinklaw

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1. Opening remarks.
2. Approval of the report from the March 3, 2011 meeting.
3. Discussion and possible action on redevelopment ideas/plans for the CenterPoint MarketPlace area. Public input will occur during this item.
4. Other business.
5. Adjourn.

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1. Opening remarks.

Mayor Halverson indicated that the conversations with Valley Bank to purchase the mall property continue. The City of Stevens Point needs to be protected as we move forward with that real estate transaction. Environmental testing needs to be done, as well as working out an agreement with Shopko. We are moving along on the environmental testing, and expect the results back within a matter of days. Once we have the results from the environmental testing and an agreement with Shopko, we can then continue our process with Valley Bank to finalize the transaction.

2. Approval of the report from the March 3, 2011 meeting.

Motion by Kruthoff to approve the report; seconded by Hanson. Motion carried for the HP/DRC 6-0.

Motion by Patton to approve the report; seconded by Rice. Motion carried for the Plan Commission 5-0.

3. Discussion and possible action on redevelopment ideas/plans for the CenterPoint MarketPlace area. Public input will occur during this item.

John Kneer from Rettler Corporation shared a PowerPoint presentation that showed the aerial view of the CenterPoint MarketPlace area as it currently exists. Mr. Kneer took the information provided from the March 3, 2011 public input meeting, as well as other comments from residents and businesses.

Mr. Kneer indicated that Phase One of the project includes the Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) development with the Third Street extension. Phase Two of the project includes the redevelopment of the center section of the CenterPoint MarketPlace area. The following three concepts will deal with Phase Two of the project.

Concept 3 (see Attachment A): Concept 3 extends both Third Street and Strongs Avenue all the way to Centerpoint Drive. Both would have two-way traffic. Mr. Kneer indicated that he would suggest making Strongs Avenue two-way all the way to the courthouse. This concept also has an east-west one-way street that goes between the CenterPoint MarketPlace building and the buildings that front on Main Street. Mr. Kneer indicated that with this concept, as well as the other concepts, there will need to be a traffic study completed. The building impact would include the removal of the sections for Third Street and Strongs Avenue, as well as the east-west street. This concept preserves the most building area of all three concepts. The building would have some variable size purchase or lease spaces and a pedestrian area that would be where the current atrium area exists. The plan also shows a small area for mechanical space. The site circulation shows traffic flow from Main Street with the ability to get back to this space with a new one-way street option running the south side of the mall in an eastern direction. This provides more traffic access in the area, and new frontage for the buildings along Main Street. The plan also shows area for a drop off for the Children's Museum and the space needed to restore the Fox Theater. The plan also includes parallel parking along the streets.

Concept 2 (see Attachment B): Concept 2 shows the roadway being straight and two-way, as opposed to Concept 3 where it had a curve and only one-way. Concept 2 also shows additional parking areas compared to Concept 3, however, more of the building has been removed. Concept 2 keeps the atrium area and some variable size purchase or lease spaces. Concept 2 also includes additional green space between the current Shopko building and the mall area.

Concept 1 (see Attachment C): Concept 1 removes the balance of the mall area and opens up the space, leaving lots of green space. The roadway pattern is similar to Concept 3, however, only the proposed MSTC building, the former Dunham's Sports building, and the current Shopko building remain. This concept shows the availability of green space and public areas, with the possibility of placing an outdoor amphitheater in conjunction with the Fox Theater.

Mr. Kneer opened up the forum for public comments regarding the concepts.

Kathy Burban, 1408 Strongs Avenue - Likes many things about all the plans, but likes Concept 3 the best, because there are spaces that can be leased or sold to put more money back on to the tax roll. In addition, you can walk both inside and around the outside of the building.

Jo Seiser, 317 Sixth Avenue - Likes Concept 3 for the same reasons, and likes the opportunities for small businesses. Ms. Seiser is in favor of the southern row of business spaces available and is in favor of the new frontage on the west side for businesses. She also thinks it is imperative to have a winter campus for the students as well as the citizens for walking.

Dani Crinklaw, 2329 Sims Street - Is in favor of Concept 3, but instead of the retail space, she believes the road on the south side should be moved up like the road layout on the south side of Concept 2.

Bernie Coerper, 1400 West River Drive – Stated that these plans seem to be the same as the last meeting and all we have are roads. He asked where are the north-south, as well as the east-west interior walkways. Mr. Coerper wants to see interior pedestrian walkways, and not streets.

Mr. Kneer stated that he had drawn the concepts from the input of the last session, as well as additional comments that he received. Phase One is to separate the MSTC area from the mall.

Jan Herman, 1408 Strongs Avenue – Would like to see Third Street be a pedestrian walkway like State Street in Madison, to take out the building area for students to congregate and have permanent outdoor seating area, and have Strongs Avenue go through.

Norm Meyers, 416 Union Street - Likes concepts 1 and 3. It is nice to have walkways, but we have the Green Circle Trail and the parks by the river for walking. He does like the traffic flow around the building and if we use concept 1, then put the stage area in the south west corner for better visibility.

Mr. Kneer clarified that the stage in the concept is at the angle for the most viewing area, and gives more space for audiences.

Cindy Nebel, 1100 Phillips Street - Stated that Concept 1 is just redoing the square and we already have a theater and fountain. She likes Concept 3 and have Strongs Avenue being a two-way street, but suggests that Third Street be a bike and pedestrian area.

Bob Fisch, 2009 A Division Street - Likes Concept 3, but prefers the east -west road between the buildings from Concept 2. He believes the lack of outdoor seating is a negative for Concept 2. Also, he likes the bend in the east-west road on Concept 3. This will help slow down traffic. The north-south routes on Concept 3 provide an option for road closures for festivals.

Kati Matthai, Children’s Museum – Stated that due to safety reasons for the children, there is a need for parking on the south side of the mall. There is also a need for enough room for a bus to drop off children without causing traffic to back up. She does like the strong pedestrian link, but two-way traffic is needed.

John Gardner, 1308 Wisconsin Street - Does not like Concept 1 due to the lack of density and the need for persons to be there on a daily basis. However, you can still incorporate the sidewalk café

spaces. He believes that there should not be a pedestrian mall on Third Street and that it should be a real street with design techniques to slow traffic. Mr. Gardner also pointed out that if you have the tax base from Concept 3, then you need more parking, and Concept 3 does not support that. He does like the exterior walls for the store fronts. He is also concerned that we need to create more of a Main Street appearance instead of a Clark Street appearance. As for the earlier suggestion of a pedestrian mall, he stated that Wausau and Sheboygan tried that, and they were not successful. He wanted to point out that we need to reintroduce the grid street system into the downtown, and all the traffic should be two-way.

Kathy Burban, 1408 Strongs Avenue - Had a question about the number of parking spaces on Concept 3, and if the green space on the south east corner behind the Fox Theater could be parking. She does not believe that the busses dropping off children at the Children's Museum do not seem to present an issue with traffic.

Mr. Kneer suggested that we could put parking in that area.

Fritz Menzel, 1400 Brawley Street - Asked if we could shift Centerpoint Drive north, and then add more parking on the Lullabye property. He also wanted to know if there is an interest of the property owners on Main Street to move the mall for open space behind their businesses.

Mr. Kneer answered that there would be a disjoint with parking from the business areas, and does not believe we can do that based on access to the downtown.

Sarah Robinson, Association of Downtown Businesses - Stated of the business owners she had spoken to, the concern was for more parking. Most of the businesses that she spoke with liked Concept 2, except for the small south east parking lot due to one property owner wanting to possibly expand in that area. Everyone was very supportive of the two-way streets going through.

Fritz Menzel, 1400 Brawley Street - Stated that he would not tear down any of the mall, except the space needed for Third Street. Mr. Fritz does not think that the Fox Theater is needed.

Nancy Schultz, 925 Smith Street - Likes Concept 2 because she does not relish the concept of the city being a landlord. She does like the parking on Concept 2. She is concerned that people need to have a vision and look beyond the building. It is critical in her opinion to have the circular flow of vehicles to the area, and the Lullabye area. Concept 2 gives the most access to the Children's Museum with preserving the pedestrian walk area. If we are going to have landscaping, then it needs to be kept looking nice all the time.

Fred Siemers, 1961 Plover Street - Was questioning the economic reality and how do we convince a developer to make an investment into downtown. He believes that Concept 3 will be difficult to do.

Jan Herman, 1408 Strongs Avenue - Stated that he wanted to rescind his plan for Third Street to only be a pedestrian path. He would like to make it a street. He wanted to stress that one of our City's icons is the Green Circle Trail, and that we should try to tie that in.

Chairperson Beveridge stated that the backs of the Main Street buildings are historic and he would like to know if the property owners have a desire to add on to their buildings.

Tom Brown, 317 Sixth Avenue - Likes Concept 3 and thinks 2 is ok. He believes that Third Street should be a street and suggests taking 20 feet from the east of MSTC to widen the street. Mr. Brown also wanted to suggest moving the roadway closer to the mall on the south side of the building, and to place more parking in that area. If there is not the retail space on the south side of the building, the walking area could be designed similar to Cedar Creek with a covered walkway and the option of opening up large garage doors in the nicer weather. He also suggests making the leasable space small in his opinion the green space between Shopko and the mall building is not usable space. More landscaping should be added to the MSTC parking area to make it more appealing.

Steve Smith, MSTC - Stated he is very encouraged by the traffic patterns in the concepts.

Cathy Dugan, 615 Sommers Street - Likes Concept 3. She is very dismayed at the new pavement to the area and thinks there are other solutions. She also brought up the Eco-Municipality pledge and the Task Force that the city had previously put together. She wanted to let everyone know that the League of Women Voters would have a forum with their stand by the next input session.

Andrew Beveridge, 316 Union Street - Wanted to know if we could place a parking structure in the downtown area. He also mentioned that he liked the idea that Mr. Yudchitz brought up of selling the spaces as condominiums, instead of rentals. He was also hopeful that by putting roads through the area, that more traffic would follow and in turn, increase development. Mr. Beveridge does not agree with Concept 1, as it looks like we give up on the area.

Mary Ann Laszewski, 1209 Wisconsin Street - Stated that she thought the City should sell the properties as condominium retail spaces. The greatest loss was the street grids when the mall was built. Bringing back the street grids in the plan would be nice. Also, she listed many suggestions for the open rentable space, including home, dog, or boat shows, as well as flea or antique markets.

John Dolan, 318 Washington Avenue - Does not agree with any concept due to the budget constraints. He believes that the only plan that is within the budget is Concept 1. We need a concept that saves the exterior walls. He does like Concept 3, but there is not enough money to do it. Mr. Dolan agrees that there is a need to reestablish the street grids, but to tear down the outside walls is expensive.

Andrew Beveridge, 316 Union Street - Asked about the funds available for these concepts.

Mayor Halverson stated that we have approximately \$1.3 - \$1.7 million to take care of what needs to be done. Mayor Halverson stated that in order to do this project it will likely require a developer to be involved. In addition, we will also have to look at other funding options, such as DOT funds.

Elbert Rackow, 1824 Gilkay Street - Does not like Concept 1 and there is at least 25 useful years left of the mall. He does like Concept 3 with modifications such as having Third Street be a pedestrian walkway. He believes there is no need for Strong's Avenue to go north, but only southbound like it is and to leave the building connection to Shopko.

John Dolan, 316 Washington Avenue – Does not believe that the owners on Main Street would want to be forced to develop their stores on the backside of their buildings. By leaving the south quadrant of the mall area you would still have room for a street, green space, and some parking.

The plumbing in the existing building is either on the north or south wall, and with any redevelopment of the interior, we will have to tear up flooring. We also can't sell space for too low of a price, otherwise, businesses on Main Street will leave their store and develop in the mall, and then we will have empty spaces on Main Street. We have to make sure we look at it from the economic side.

Resident, 2608 Prais Street – Wanted to know the timing of the projects. She also wanted to know if the conversations could move from just likeability, to combine it with sensibility.

Ald. Moore stated that Phase One is right away, and the Phase Two has no set time frame, but maybe this summer.

John Dolan, 316 Washington Avenue - Stated he would run the costs for redeveloping the mall and put it up on his website at www.archcentralinc.com.

Barb Jacob, 1616 Depot Street - Asked if we had the costs to do the renovations, and why are we picking concepts without seeing the costs for each one.

Mr. Kneer stated that this is the concept phase, and not the cost phase. When we get a concept we like, then we can figure the costs, and go back to the concept if needed.

A citizen asked if we kept the mall as it is, would we able to use it.

Todd Grunwaldt, Grunwaldt and Associates – Stated that the mechanical units in the mall are shot, and utilities will need to be redone. The mechanical systems are so old that they are unable to get parts to do repairs.

Dan Stoltz, 3017 McCulloch Street – Likes the main idea of MSTC relocating to the mall area, but agrees that we need to take into consideration the cost of the project. He would like to see the other streets go through to give persons in the northern part of the city a better access to the downtown.

Fritz Menzel, 1400 Brawley Street - Stated that we need to keep in mind that the difficulty in renting out the spaces was based on Dial's approach. In addition, there will be 2,000 or more persons in the area due to MSTC being there.

Henry Kroeger, 3200 Water Street - Believes that we have time and we have good ideas, but that there should be a private enterprise to take over.

Mike Phillips, 3225 Mary Street – Likes the idea of leaving out the Fox Theater and the Children's Museum, and to have the street go straight through and add more parking to the south side of the road.

Bernie Coerper, 1400 West River Drive – Stated that the money is already budgeted for Third Street, but we have 1.4 million dollars to offer someone to come in and do something with what is there. A developer will have money to spend on it as well. It will be a lot cheaper to leave the walls standing until we have a developer.

Norm Meyers, 416 Union Street - Wants us to remember to keep in our decision likability, do-ability, and cost-ability as the key deciding factors.

4. Other business.

Director Ostrowski indicated that the next public input session will be Saturday, March 26, 2011 at 12:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Center in the Multipurpose Room.

5. Adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.